DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 432 038 EA 029 901

AUTHOR Duncan, P. Kay; Seguin, Cynthia Anast; Spaulding, Wendy
TITLE The Perfect Match: A Case Study of a First Year Woman Principal.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Montreal, Quebec, Canada, April 19-23, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Principals; Case Studies; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Females; *Instructional Leadership; *Leadership Styles; *Principals; Resistance to Change; School Administration; Teacher Attitudes; *Women Administrators
IDENTIFIERS Texas

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study illustrating the experiences of a first-year elementary-school principal. It follows her through her 18 months on the job, and analyzes the factors contributing to her ouster. The data for the study were gathered through two interviews with the principal and interviews with five other persons in her school district. It relates the principal's positive impressions of her first year on the job and her firm conviction that she had won the trust of her teachers. However, interviews with others revealed that teachers felt that the principal was trying to change too many things too rapidly and that she had little respect for the ways in which teachers had handled situations in the past. Although the principal had enjoyed some successes in her first year, having met all of her goals, teacher resentment continued to grow and undermined their respect for the principal. She was perceived as a foreigner in this small-town school, which, combined with her perceived abrasive style, increased the staff's alienation. Speculations about what the principal could have done to save her position are offered, but her inability to listen to her teachers and their ideas and opinions doomed any such hope of acceptance. (RJM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 432 038

THE PERFECT MATCH:

A CASE STUDY OF A FIRST YEAR WOMAN PRINCIPAL

P. Kay Duncan

Cynthia Anast Seguin

Wendy Spaulding

Division of School Leadership, Middle/Secondary Teacher Education
Box 4037, 1200 Commercial
Emporia State University
Emporia, KS 66801

316-341-5776
FAX: 316-341-5768
Duncanpk@emporia.edu
Seguincy@emporia.edu
Spauldiw@esuvm.emporia.edu

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Kay Duncan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

American Educational Research Association, April 19-23, 1999

EA 029 901

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

First-year principals are surely excited about their new jobs and their new roles. They have spent the last few years in administrator training programs thinking about what kinds of actions they will take upon becoming principals. They doubtless have learned from as well as critiqued their past and current principals. They have been exposed to and hopefully gained from their studies, the characteristics and skills needed to be effective educational leaders. They make a choice of their first principalship based on many factors; many of them believing that there is a good match between who they will be as a principal and who the district/school want as a principal. Can anything be done when the match turns out to be less than perfect? What is the role that listening might play in such an instance?

The following case study, drawn from a larger study (See Document 6.1), presents the story of what happened to one woman principal during her first year and one-half on the job in a small elementary school. It is hoped that school leaders as well as those who train them can use this case study to good advantage.

One Horse Town

In a June email titled "One Horse Town", Judy Aronson[1] wrote to one of her former professors in the educational administration program from which she had recently graduated.

> *Just a quick note to tell you I accepted a position. It's been an amazing two weeks. The most amazing part is where I ended up and the underlying reasons. ESU was the perfect experience to prepare me, and your mentoring really guided the process from the very first class.*
> *My home will be Austin Center.... It's only thirty minutes from my current place, but it's a different planet!*
> *More later. Just wanted to keep you informed.*
> *Judy*

Judy had agreed two years previously to participate in a study of first year women principals. Therefore, she and the professor had kept track of one another so that the study might be carried out as soon as Judy signed up for her first principalship. In classroom work, the professor had found Judy to be an intelligent and dedicated educator and student. She also thought that Judy would be ideal as one of the participants in her study of first year principals and how their use of power affected other peoples' perceptions of their success as principals.

In a consequent email to her professor, Judy described the exciting things that would be happening immediately in Austin Center. She had already planned summer staff development with the superintendent. The board was meeting on June 16 to discuss architectural plans for a new elementary school. Although the board had had the preliminary plans for two years, the superintendent had had trouble getting the board to move toward a bond campaign. He was looking for a partner to get it moving and Judy was it! Judy described Austin Center to be as far as one can get (figuratively speaking) from the suburban school district where she had taught for 15 years. She characterized it as very rural, but progressive in philosophy: full inclusion, technology, mastery learning and Glasser's Quality Schools' Model. As she would find out later, appearances can be deceiving.

---

[1] Names of people and places have been changed to protect identity.

Judy herself has two masters degrees and 30 plus hours of post-graduate work. She had served the last four years in her previous position as a "lead teacher" or unofficial assistant principal. In a July email, she notified the researcher that she was hiring her first teacher, doing a math adoption, and moving in (in that order). Her professor was not to hear from her again until the following May when she was completing her first year as a principal at Austin Center Elementary School.

The Austin Center district is indeed about as different from Judy's former school district as a quietly swirling stream is from a powerful, current-filled river. The size of the elementary school is 300 students. The total number of students in the district, K-12, is 600. The student population is 97% White, .6% Black, 1.8% Hispanic, and 2.3% Native American. The teachers on the staff are 100% White. The average income in this middle class rural community is $40,000. Although many of the citizens of the three small towns making up the school district commute to the large nearby city for jobs, the area is mainly agricultural in nature. Therefore most of the families of the three communities are currently farming or are of an agrarian background. The community members come from a wide range of economic levels, some very low socioeconomic. All three of the small towns are economically depressed, which leads to a type of class war between the "have's" and the "have not's." Recently, several new people have moved to the area from the city, buying property and building new homes. Although this leads to an eclectic mix of people, for the most part, the citizens are traditional, religious right, conservative thinkers. The power basis in the community is found in the farming families or in the families that have been there for generations.

The school district does not escape the interrelationships found in the community. Everyone is related to everyone else, so to speak. On the staff there are cousins and nieces and nephews and sisters and brothers who have been there throughout the whole history of the district. The superintendent was recruited six years ago to take a financially impoverished district and resurrect it. He is extremely progressive and has radical philosophical views compared to the conservative views of the community. When he was hired, the district was in danger of closing. As he was a financially astute manager, he immediately did the things that needed to be done to pass a bond issue, to get the right kind of state aid, and to search for and obtain good grants.

Before Judy was hired, the superintendent had noted that children were treated poorly in the schools. Although the teachers loved the students, they also paddled and yelled at them. The superintendent wrote grants so that the entire district could receive quality school training, choice theory and reality therapy training. Although seven teachers have now completed five years of that training, the majority of the staff think it is a bunch of hogwash and said so from day one in an open, angry, and resentful manner. At the same time as Glasser training (quality schools, etc.) was begun, the district started and completed in one year, full inclusion K-12 with children in the classrooms the majority of the day. Although the superintendent had promised staff sufficient training in the inclusion model, most staff members believe that they received scarcely any training. The staff was angry, resentful, and mistrusting and denounced the superintendent (openly or otherwise) as arrogant and godlike. They claimed all of his initiatives were wrong for Austin Center. There were major problems with inclusion. Additionally, the school was only provisionally accredited on the first outcomes-based accreditation visit from the

state. Staff and community seemed to blame the superintendent for this provisional accreditation, as they felt he did not put the district in a good light when the team visited.

When Judy arrived four years later, her predecessor had been fired, mainly because she had not been implementing the previously mentioned initiatives. She was identified as a blocker. The superintendent and board felt that the right leader in the school would promote the initiatives and help them to be successful. Judy was recruited to write curriculum with staff members, raise test scores, raise student performance, implement inclusion, implement the Glasser positive self-discipline model, and bring in performance-based, hands on education. In fact, when Judy arrived in June of that first summer, the math committee, which consisted of the superintendent and two teachers (sixth grade and special education), had just recommended the purchase of a progressive math series that was all hands-on work. Judy, as a brand-new principal, got about a three-day period to take a quick look, get the staff together to vote on it and accept it, put it into place, and purchase it for the coming school year. In Judy's own words: "Well, I tried. I gathered feedback from the staff and they all had a vote and they all said 'Yes, we'll try it.' But I did a pretty good sales job. I came in as a brand-new person and had used some hands-on investigative type of math in [my prior district] and had seen that progression, and promoted it because what they had was dismal." Although teachers voiced their reluctance to Judy, they agreed to the new math program and did not totally block it. Judy believes that they did not have any idea what they were getting into – how difficult it would be to learn, how much time it would take them to jump in and try to put it into place, the level of expertise that would be involved.

Nine Months = Lifetime of Experience

When Judy wrote her next email, nine months later, it seemed to exude a frantic energy and a focus on things that needed doing. It's subject line stated enigmatically, "9 Months = Lifetime of Experience.

> *You are probably nearing the end of your semester, if not already done. I hope you have readied a whole new crop of administrators to do battle in the name of social justice. (My job is a perfect fit for the role.) We are in the frantic last four weeks of the school year: hiring staff, writing curriculum, Kindergarten Round Up, adopting resources, building class lists, planning PTO events for next year, etc. You know the scenario.*
>
> *What a year this has been! I will never be the same person again.... I won't keep you with chitchat, only to admit the real principalship is an amazing beast – one that takes every ounce of positive drive and servant leadership housed in every tiny bone of the body and still demands 1,000 times more. Some days it's true love, others – exhaustion.*
>
> *Warmly,*
> *Judy Aronson*
> *Austin Center Elementary*

The professor/researcher was not to find out the kinds of things that actually happened during that first year until she started her research the following fall (the beginning of Judy's second year as principal). Data collection for the research was

carried out through an initial interview with Judy, interviews with five other people in the school district[2], and a final, reciprocal interview with Judy. The data reveal the story.

Seeds of Hope

Judy gives off an aura of hope for the future. In her initial interview with the two researchers, she revealed that her definition of success would be to "joyfully work with a team of people to accomplish shared goals". She was not naïve. Even though all the teachers had interviewed her and selected her as their choice for principal, Judy knew that the children, the parents, and the staff were all waiting for the new person to fail. She told the researchers that when she first arrived at the school, the environment was so closed that the staff sat in complete silence at the first staff meeting and just stared. In fact, one of the parents finally told her that she had originally thought that "whoever was hired, if they lasted, they would have to have a strong constitution or they would be gone by Christmas." However, just like the farmers in this small agricultural community, Judy had overwhelming faith that if she planted the right hybrids of teaching strategies, curriculum choices, and student management processes, then a wonderful crop of effective teaching and successful students would emerge. She proceeded to plant her seeds of hope.

Judy describes herself as very honest and as having integrity. Her drive to bring about the best possible schooling experience and her dedication to students is evident in her words and in her actions. All of Judy's actions and all of her dealings with parents and staff members is, in her own words, what she "truly feels will be good for the kids at this level." By Christmas of the first year, Judy felt that she had, for the most part, won over many of the staff members. "People were coming into the office, were bouncing into the office with ideas, meeting in the hall with suggestions, all talking at once in the faculty meeting, joyous over us getting carpeting in five classrooms. Just the trust factor was tremendously high, looking at where we came from, the previous year. And the children, by Christmas, thought of me as their principal. And the parents, at the beginning, when I would talk to someone on the phone…didn't trust this outsider. And some, several times I would have to go through layers of listening before they came to actually hear what I might say. And by about Christmas, the word got out that this person, even though she came from the city, and might have had a privileged background, possibly, cared about kids. And that word came back to me, that I cared about kids."

Judy took the job at Austin Center because she felt that it was a "perfect alignment with my mission and my personal values." At the end of the first year, she felt that "even though it was a tremendous growth period and a tremendous struggle to get through the first part, it was always clearly the spot that I was ready for." Some staff members extended themselves to her, inviting her to their homes for open houses or taking her out to dinner to give her gentle advice. Part of Judy's leadership philosophy includes an aversion to "top-down" management. She saw the past leadership in the school as being very top down, with a small group of leaders leading, and she worked hard at developing a shared decision-making model in the school. By the end of the first year, she stated that she had seen a tremendous amount of growth by faculty in the use of

[2] The five people were randomly selected from lists based on purposely-selected categories: another administrator in the district, a parent with whom Judy had worked, and two teachers and a classified staff member in Judy's school.

the participatory style. She added that, because she was a first-year principal, she thought the staff did not see her as a threat and were willing to give her power. "They saw me going through a period of growth, taking risks totally unaware of what was coming up the next day, and then willing to share that with them, and laugh about it with them, and give them some ownership in it, and be comfortable with it. And then we were able to learn together and grow together. So it gave me much more power with my staff and my fellow administrators than I would have had if I'd had a big long history of success and power."

Just as good farmers know that they must cultivate the earth, and add fertilizer to the soil in order for seeds to germinate and grow, Judy knew that she should prepare the environment before making any drastic changes in the school. She worked hard at fostering a climate in which professionals can feel supported and thrive. In Judy's view the first year was a year of relationship building and she took that task very seriously. "I tried to heal the staff last year. I tried to run back and forth, negotiating between the superintendent and his initiatives and the staff. I tried to build bridges where they had been totally blown away." She stated that she also worked to create a stable staff and worked very hard to nurture whoever came into her building with a personal relationship. She even formed personal relationships with the custodians and then lobbied for them with the superintendent.

In preparing the ground for crops, farmers must initially plow under weeds and brush, being unable to change the terrain in any major way until the land has been cleared. Similarly, Judy expressed that she held off on significant change, focusing only in the area of facilities, making changes that would not threaten the staff, but rather pave the way for the seeds she wished to plant. She did this by going to battle to address neglect in the building and bringing about aesthetic improvements such as new carpets, flooring, paint, and long overdue maintenance. She was able to increase the flow of technology and technology support in the elementary building by putting an extreme amount of pressure on the technology coordinator. Additionally, Judy knew that it was important to demonstrate that she embraced the community by having a home built there. In the fall of her second year, she welcomed the entire staff to her new home for one stage of a progressive dinner.

Although Judy consciously avoided making major changes in the school, she did manage to plant and fertilize some seeds. It was of course necessary to implement the math curriculum that the superintendent and two teachers had chosen before her arrival. She also urged the reading specialist to do more one-on-one or small group reading instruction and less on computers to better support the Title 1 students. At the end of the first year, she actually changed this teacher's job description, put her back into Title 1 reading full-time, and hired an aide to support the computer lab classes. In response to state-required performance assessments that determine accreditation, Judy conducted research to locate materials that would help teachers and students to do better on these assessments. She gave support and mentoring to a young teacher, an outsider with progressive ideas, who had been sinking without coaching and had been placed on intensive evaluation by the previous principal. She counseled the fifth-grade teachers (who had class sizes of 26 and 27, which they considered to be large) to do more project-based learning, asking them to implement more cooperative learning, to get the kids involved. In her words she wanted them to "Get the kids more excited about learning and to quit throwing pages of textbooks at them." As for a new teacher who had poor

classroom management skills, she coached him in how to do lesson plans, how to prepare systematically for class, and how to have less down time. She confronted two experienced teachers, one of whom had poor social skills, and the other of whom was resentful and very hard on students at times. Because she felt that there were many staff members who were treating children punitively and yelling at them, she tried to model a different type of behavior, particularly during her supervision of the cafeteria.

At the end of the first year, Judy felt successful. She believed that some of the seeds had taken root. By her own self-assessment, she had met every one of the goals that she had written for her own initiatives, under the superintendent's guidelines. The superintendent had written a three-page glowing summative evaluation commenting on how wonderful it was that she had met every single one of her twenty-three goals. In his evaluation meeting with her two weeks before the board meeting considering her renewal, the superintendent had stated that her performance was perfect, top-notch, that she was doing an excellent job. Some of the teachers related to her that it was the very best year they had ever had in the school. It seemed that the community was satisfied with the job she had done during her first year. Although the three million dollar bond issue for a K-3 building and an elementary building was defeated during the first year, a phone survey of staff and community during her second year had shown good support of the bond issue – a presumed change in attitudes because of the things Judy had done.

By many measures and against her own standards, Judy Aronson considered her first year to be successful. She thought that a lot of people felt that she would have less and less opportunity to make a difference in succeeding years as principal and that she wouldn't have as much fun. But she believed that, without a doubt, her successes of the first year would increase her power to make a difference in Austin Elementary's future.

Losing Ground

Sometimes, after the ground is prepared and fertilized, and the seeds are carefully planted, events happen that can cause the soil to wash away from the roots of the young seedlings or that can crush the first tender shoots of the slowly growing plant. Torrential rains, hail storms, drought, strong hot winds can all cause an erosion of the terrain. Such erosion can be disastrous to the crop. Events like these began to happen in Judy's school and it seemed that her potential for effectiveness was also losing ground. These events, as described from the point of view of others in the school and community (see footnote #3) would prove to be defining events of Judy's first year. The stories of these events were told over and over until they became a type of folklore about Judy, leading to the characteristics by which she became known throughout the community.

Judy saw the cafeteria as a place where students were treated inappropriately and disrespectfully and tried to change that atmosphere and that expectation. However, a staff member, first explaining that the cafeteria is now so noisy that the clerk cannot hear the children give her their computer card numbers, describes the event in another way:

> We used to have lunchroom teachers, and the idea was kids got to know them.... It worked. Now she's changed it; the lunchroom. Last year it was in the hands of the faculty. ... Now, as soon as you turn your back, they're (the children) clapping. I mean, they don't seem to respect her, because she changes things a lot, from school bells to red lights and green lights.... [T]oday the cafeteria was a big issue in the teacher's lunchroom –you know, what a mess it was. Judy was on a field trip. ... They (the instructional aides hired to do lunchroom supervisory

duty) came in and said, "This is ridiculous. We don't blow the whistle, but we make them put their heads down." I asked, "Why don't you blow the whistle? It worked before." "Well, she doesn't want us to blow a whistle. That'd be infringing on their…." You know.

This staff member saw this event as an indication that Judy didn't value the way the teachers had been doing their job in the cafeteria. "[S]he doesn't seem to have a heart for the people that are under her, a respect. … Hey, you know, these people have been doing this for a long time. You don't need to come down and be their savior. You know, if you've got some suggestions, just leave it as a suggestion and not a dictate."

Another factor contributing to the erosion of the faculty's ability to work with Judy was created by a string of events in which staff members perceived that Judy was telling them how to do things: how to teach the curriculum, how to deal with children, how to organize lesson plans. One of the teachers said, "When she first came in, there were certain things that she wanted us to do certain ways. And she would say 'Now, I want you to do this and this and this.' A lot of these things were things that we have done for years, but she made it sound like it was her idea, a new idea, we're going to start doing this. It made people feel like, 'well, did she think we haven't done any of this in the past?' You know that type of feeling. …In meetings and stuff before they said, 'Well, Judy, we've always done that.' But sometimes I think it goes in and back out…. It's like, 'This was my idea.'

Other events convinced faculty that Judy was trying to control everything and wasn't letting people do their jobs. A staff member said:

> She is trying to control everything. I mean, it's like, even things that really should not be controlled by her. She tries to take over every situation….Like, okay. If she gives somebody a job every Monday morning or every PTO meeting, "I want you to put the sign out in front of the lawn that says PTO Meeting Tonight." She gave this job to the counselor, and then she would come in and before the counselor would have time to put it out, she would go and get two sixth grade kids, have them take it out and put it out. Like she thought she (the counselor) wasn't going to think about it. So she gave jobs, but then she always turns around and does them before….And then she would go have somebody else do it, you know? Or somebody would say "I'll get a list of…." They were going to get a list of the basic sight words for one of the other teachers. And the beginning teacher said, "Well, Sarah has some. I'll go down and get them." And, so then while she was gone to get them, Judy went ahead and got another list from somebody else instead of waiting for the teacher to come back with the list. And she (the teacher) had already said she was going to get them for her. I mean, she just had to walk down the hall and go get them and by the time she got back, Judy had already got them. You know, things like that. You know, just wait and let them do it.

One event that happened early in the fall of Judy's second year had become a folk tale before Christmas. One staff member said that Judy "went in to observe a classroom – and this is all hearsay that I heard teachers talking about. It was supposed to be an observation and she got up and ended up teaching the class." Another teacher described a similar incident in which Judy came into the classroom, saw kids studying individually for a test, and starting pairing up the students without asking the teacher. This teacher indicated that the same thing had happened the previous year with a first-year teacher,

explaining "She does that kind of stuff all the time –especially with teachers she thinks are incompetent."

Some sections of a field, because of where they lie, are not subjected to the erosion of water and wind. Circumstances dictate that the water and wind will nurture these sections of land and the crop will be healthy. There were several such "healthy" events in Judy's first year and one-half at Austin Center. For example, the parent[3] interviewed told the researchers about an uplifting experience she had with Judy. She stated that her son

> "had been having problems in school for the two years before, with not completing his work. And it just got blown off. … We probably wouldn't have made it through last year without Ms. Aronson and (my son's) teacher. If those two women had not been so compassionate as to make sure that he was going to maintain doing his work, even if he didn't want to, because that was his excuse most of the time, and if he didn't have somebody to care and her (Judy) going to the efforts of even driving him home so he would stay after school, I think he wouldn't have made it to the next grade…. If it wasn't for Ms. Aronson making the effort, and calling me and letting me know, you know, this is getting kind of way out of hand. I think we need to do this and deal with it. She brought him to counseling. The counselor and him [sic] would talk about issues and she would bring him in the office and just say, 'Talk to me and tell me what's bothering you." So, she (Judy) shows a lot of concern.

It becomes evident, in looking at these occurrences from others' perspectives, that the soil loss is at first slow and barely noticeable. Judy, who is focused on doing what needs to be done, does not really take note of the erosion. However, just as can happen with the farmer despite his hard work and dedication, the constant, slow erosion of soil leaches away necessary nutrients, leaving an infertile harvest – a bitter harvest.

A Bitter Harvest

A gloomy, chilly climate began to spread through Judy's school as teacher frustrations with her increased. Despite all of Judy's good intentions and efforts to sow and reap a bountiful harvest, the crop was struggling to survive.

Attitudes towards Judy shifted from enthusiasm or indifference to quiet anger. Yet, bits of hope remained for this newcomer. Some staff were able to voice disagreements and concerns to her without fear. For example, one staff member said: "I pretty much tried to nip"…Judy's condescending attitude "in the bud. I'd tease her" and…try to get through to her."

One of the parents feels that Judy has been a much-needed improvement over the previous principal. She stated that Judy has a fresh outlook, is up to date on behaviors, manuals, and what is going on with children nowadays. Whereas with the previous principal she felt just like she was talking to her and nothing was going through, about Judy she claimed "I know that Ms. Aronson listens to you, and takes your concerns at hand, and tries to build up on them there." She continued by stating that Judy evaluates situations and takes them where they need to go. She considers Judy to be very helpful and sees her as involved, down to earth and easy to approach. She said that she often sees Ms. A. "out in the hallway, talking to the students and talking to the teachers, …as you

[3] This young professional woman and mother has two children in Austin Center Elementary School. Her family moved into the district four years ago. She works in the large suburban area nearby.

could put it, user-friendly." With her own son, she felt Judy had done all the right things and that she shows a lot of concern for the students. This parent also sees Judy as having power to "persuade somebody to do things that are better off for the school", in that she was able to keep the second grade classes small and start to build a kindergarten program. In short, this parent thinks Judy has done a very good job and has succeeded in what she is doing without necessarily feeling she had power, since she was new at her job and didn't know anybody else.

Additionally, one of the staff members states that she has a rather close professional relationship with Judy. She says "I don't have any trouble with Judy... I think she is really pretty good...I don't take things personal (sic). If she says something that I don't like I may just tell her that I don't like it and I don't think it's going to work, and you know, she doesn't hurt my feelings. I guess I'm hard. It just doesn't bother me."

Yet the frustration level increased like rising flood waters. Some things remained difficult for teachers to communicate to Judy. There were issues and conversations teachers wanted to have with Judy but did not share with her. Judy's perceived putdowns of individuals and her perceived "foreignness" to this small community increased staff bitterness, despite Judy's efforts to have others get to know and trust her. One analysis of the turmoil was that Judy..."doesn't know how to treat people down here who act a little bit different than she does and act differently than she thinks they should. So, I think that's a little bit of the problem...She doesn't know how to interact with parents or the kids...Simple things we think of but she doesn't. And she doesn't realize them."

Pretty soon Judy's one-way interjections of "I did this in my classroom" or "At 'Big City' school we did this made bile rise in the throats of staff to the point of choking off responses and opportunities for initiated two-way conversations. Yet, some staff considered Judy to "...communicate pretty well most of the time" and be "somewhat successful" despite the emerging issues. Judy's good ideas were acknowledged, yet the manner in which she presented them was questioned. "She just throws them out there and that's the way it's going to be" did not allow easy opportunities for discussions.

This chilly atmosphere and distancing was projected to be Judy's fault. "I think Judy's honestly...brought this on herself...That's why I feel sorry for her...Within two or three months she started alienating some people." Was there the chance that Judy, at this point, could have self-corrected in time to still have a modest crop of successes and lay the ground for better communications? "It depends on if she changes or not...or stays exactly like she is...I would just hope for her sake...that the light bulb would come on and she would see that light and she'd say 'This is what I have to do to win these people back.'...I'm not hearing much forgiveness...I would tell her 'You need to grovel'...I don't know if she knows how to grovel. But I think she's going to have to say 'Guys' at one of her staff meetings, 'I came down here and blew it. I am so sorry. I have such a wonderful staff with so much talent and I...' And additionally say...'There are some changes I would like to make, but I'm so sorry that I came in and we didn't take it slow [sic].'...Please, please give me another chance and tell me'...I think it's going to have to come straight from the heart."

Other advice vocalized for Judy was to "stay away from the real haters." Another staff member felt that "if she was willing to change some of her ways...the teachers would have to be more supportive...it would make a difference...to some of them...I would say over half of them would be a lot more supportive than they are now." At this

point, the forecast was mixed, with opportunities for Judy to self-correct and to find better ways to communicate. She could still make it to harvest time with at least some of the crop of new ideas saved.

But, like weeds that take hold in a field, the negativism towards Judy spread to the students. Even something as simple as Judy's lack of effort to learn the students' names became an issue. One teacher believed students' perceptions were that Judy "...thinks she's better than my mom and my dad because...she's lived in 'Big City' and that's a big deal to those kids." This raises the question: How did the students know this?" Perhaps, as one staff member surmised, it is "just how she carries herself and acts. Students don't like the way she talks to them. It's usually a one-way conversation. She has a hard time stopping talking. You know, if she chews a kid out, she keeps going and keeps going and keeps going and keeps going instead of saying what you want to say and then let the kid go."

Indeed, Judy's success with students and staff was threatened because of "a lot of one-way conversations." Reports of this were widespread. For example: "I've had conversations with her and I know other teachers have where she literally does not listen to what they say." There did not appear to be an issue of her lack of absence from the building because she was perceived as being an ever-present principal. Judy was known to keep constant vigil over her teachers. For example, when they had curriculum committee meetings, perhaps because of her presence, communications did not open and teachers even developed a sense that she did not trust them. Her presence sent the message of distrust as a reason for her presence..."instead of letting us go work on it and bring it back to her...You don't need to be doing that as a principal."

Experiences for teachers in formal staff meetings also reflected the feeling that their "feedback doesn't matter to her" as she infrequently asked for teacher opinions. One frustrated staff member lamented that if only "she would just start listening and showing some respect for our viewpoints."

As weeks passed, the storm that was brewing, which threatened to destroy the harvest, had teachers buzzing and talking. Perhaps like the farmers in this community who gathered at the Austin Center Café to talk about the weather and make predictions about the harvest, teachers at Judy's school met twice at a local restaurant to bitterly complain about Judy's condescending "big city" manner and her lack of listening skills. "They all dislike her."

For Reflection

1. What, if anything, would you advise Judy to do to promote a better relationship between the faculty and the principal at this point in time?

2. It seems that listening played a key role in the relationship between the principal and the faculty, students, and parents. What would you have done to make sure all constituents felt "listened to"?

3. What do you think were other factors affecting the way the teachers perceive Judy?

Baptism by Fire

An email title "Baptism by Fire" arrived near the end of February. In this message, Judy delivered a heart-breaking message to the researcher.

> *Well, I can no longer claim to be a naïve rookie. I didn't get renewed for next year. You may have seen it coming from responses on the interviews. I certainly knew this was a risky long shot from the beginning, but I still went after it ... something about the superwomen syndrome, me thinks. (Do "change agents" ever grow up?) I implemented the superintendent's unpopular initiatives, so he'll probably be right behind me.*
> *I would really like to pick your brain about the best course of action at this point. I'll be starting a job search immediately and could use a little mentoring support, if you're so inclined.*
> *Is there a good time to call for a chat?*
> *Judy Aronson*
> *601-341-5778*

Document 6.1
A Study Examining How Women Principals' Use of Power
Affects Others' Perceptions of the Women's Success

The data emanates from an ethnographic case study of five women principals in a midwestern state. The study was designed to collect the following data: 1) the perspective of each woman about power, success, and the relationship of these two variables to each principal's experiences; 2) perspectives on the same topics from five other adults with whom each woman worked during her first year; 3) a determination of the predominant power behaviors of each woman based on her written response to salient questions, observations of her behaviors in the school setting, and others' responses to questions intended to elicit this information. Such triangulation was intended to evoke rich, significant and informative data.

The five women principals were selected based on demographics of their schools and their relative proximity to the researchers' university. Two came from large cities, two from rural areas, and one from a smaller city. One woman was African American, one was Hispanic, and three were European American. Two of the women had just finished their first year as principals. The other three were more experienced principals.

The study was centered around open-ended interviews using a series of very broad guiding questions. Interviews using one set of questions were held with the women principals. A similar set of questions was posed to five people with whom each woman had worked closely during her first year in the principalship: another administrator, one classified staff person, one parent, and two certified staff members from the woman's school. The five persons from each district were selected using a combination of the purposive sampling mentioned above and a type of strategic sampling. From lists of persons in each of the above categories, the fifth person in each category was selected. If that person was unavailable or unsuitable for some reason, the researchers moved backwards or forwards in the list until a participant was obtained.

Each of the interviews with participants was taped and transcripts typed up. Each interview was coded to be kept confidential. Informants were instructed not to notify the principals of their participation in the study.

After the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, "non-interviews" were held with each principal to attempt to further understand the data and to mutually negotiate the meaning of the emerging data so that, to some degree, the women principals were also involved in the analysis of the data and the formulation of conclusions. Their reactions to the data were helpful in guiding the researchers' reflections on themes emerging from the study and in shaping the reporting of the findings.

Data was entered into a qualitative analysis software program to identify emergent themes and to conduct other analyses. To further analyze the data, the researchers read, reflected on, and re-examined the scripts and the computer analyses over and over again. From this reflective, collaborative, and hermeneutical process, the researchers inferred the nature of the effect of gender and socialization on the attributes of success and power in these women principals, as perceived by others.